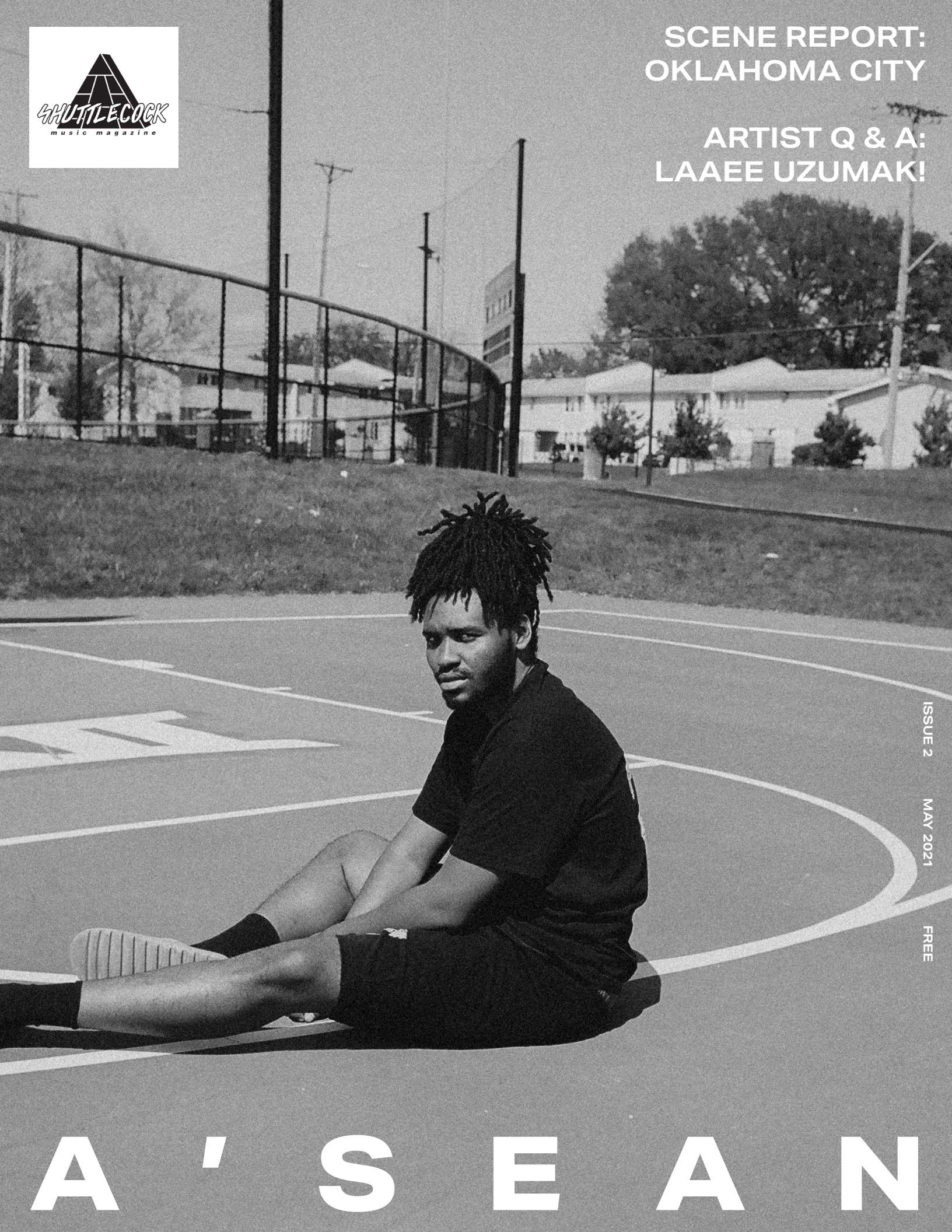


SHUTTLECOCK
music magazine

SCENE REPORT: OKLAHOMA CITY

ARTIST Q & A: LAAEE UZUMAK!

ISSUE 2 MAY 2021 FREE

A'SEAN

Official Selection
Philadelphia Independent Film Festival
NYC Independent Film Festival
OFFICIAL SELECTION
PORTLAND COMEDY FILM FESTIVAL IN OREGON
Best Music Video
OFFICIAL SELECTION
LA UNDERGROUND FILM FORUM
2016
TULSA AMERICAN FILM FESTIVAL
WINNER
Best Music
Director W. Dave Keith
2019
OFFICIAL SELECTION
Apex
Short Film + Music Video Festival
IN THE SPIRIT OF "STOP MAKING SENSE", "HEAVY METAL", AND "THE WALL"
667
Loving Relationship
STREAM ON PRIME VIDEO!
LOVESICK RECORDS

CONTENTS

3 ARTIST Q & A: LAAEE UZUMAK!

6 RECENTLY ON THE SITE

7 MY FAVORITE MERCH: DAVID CHAVEZ

9 CLUB SINISTER GOES TO CHURCH

11 SWAN SONGS: A'SEAN

16 SCENE REPORT: OKLAHOMA CITY

20 SODA SELECTOR

21 B L O G R O L L

-Visit our website:
www.ShuttlecockMusic.com
-Check out the web store:
www.ShuttlecockMag.bigcartel.com
-Follow us on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter:
@ShuttlecockMag
-Subscribe to us:
YouTube.com/ShuttlecockMusicMagazine
-Find the Shuttlecock Podcast feed wherever you get your audio
-Listen to our playlists on Spotify

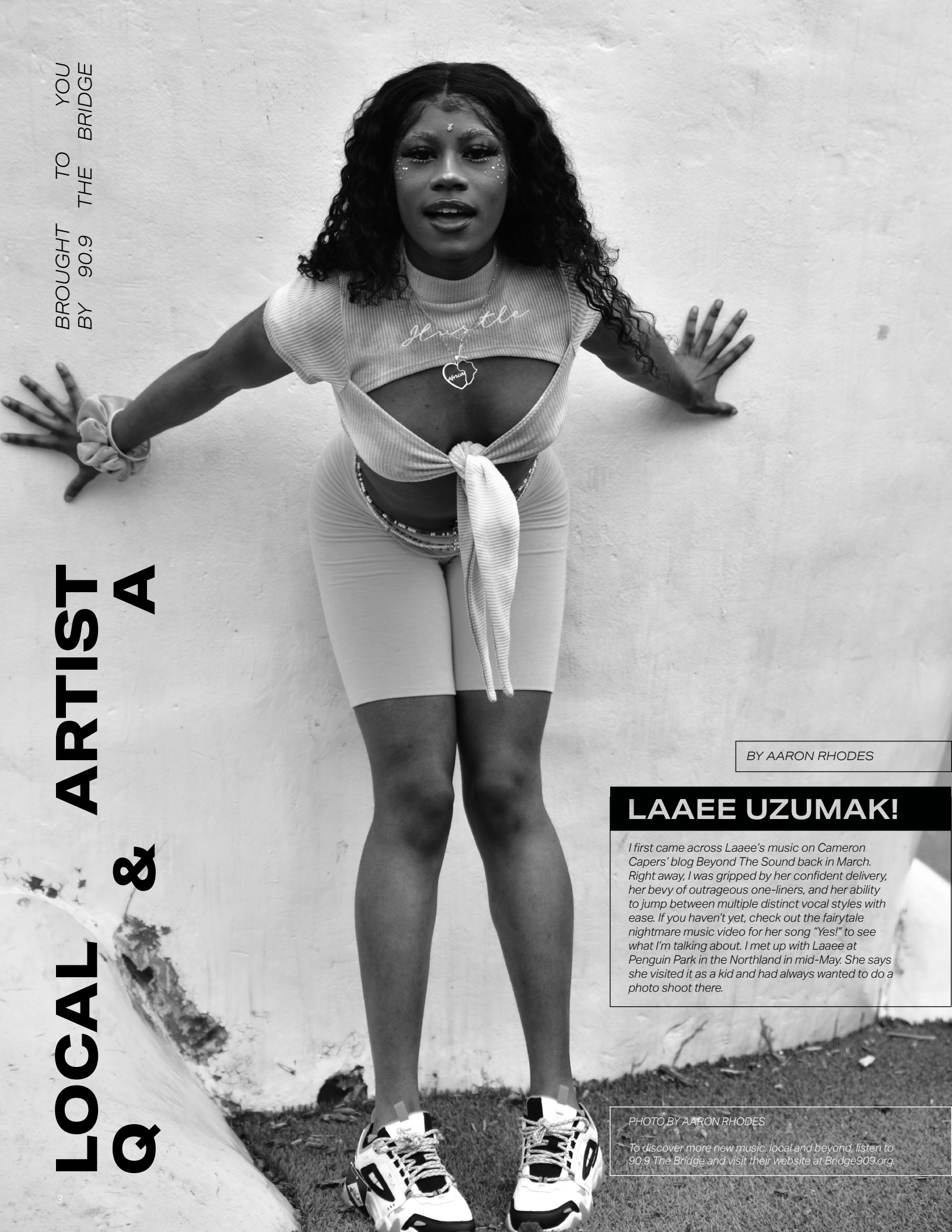
Have music to submit? Want to advertise in the magazine or sponsor another Shuttlecock project? Got a soda you want reviewed? Have a direct line to the lady who jumped in the fountain at that Royals game?

Email AaronRKC@gmail.com

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF: AARON RHODES
COVER PHOTO COURTESY OF JELANI RICE
MAGAZINE DESIGN BY CLAIRE MONROE [CLORG]
BUSINESS MANAGER: AUSTIN ELLINGTON

LOCAL ARTIST Q & A

BROUGHT TO YOU BY 90.9 THE BRIDGE



BY AARON RHODES

LAAEE UZUMAK!

I first came across Laaee's music on Cameron Capers' blog Beyond The Sound back in March. Right away, I was gripped by her confident delivery, her bevy of outrageous one-liners, and her ability to jump between multiple distinct vocal styles with ease. If you haven't yet, check out the fairytale nightmare music video for her song "Yes!" to see what I'm talking about. I met up with Laaee at Penguin Park in the Northland in mid-May. She says she visited it as a kid and had always wanted to do a photo shoot there.

PHOTO BY AARON RHODES

To discover more new music, local and beyond, listen to 90.9 The Bridge and visit their website at Bridge909.org.

Did you grow up in the area?
Yeah, so I actually grew up around the Zona Rosa area, like Northland. But both my parents are from Liberia, West Africa. So it's a lot of culture.

When did they move here?
They came here I want to say maybe 37 years ago. They've been here over 30 plus years. My dad came here first and then my mom and him got married. That's what got him his papers, and then she got her citizenship later on. But I'm like the baby in the family. I was born in 2001. I have seven brothers, three sisters. They saved the best for last, that's what I like to say.

When did you first start making music and who are some important musicians to you?
I started getting real serious maybe July 2020. And that was when I was just going through a lot of stress and I shaved my head on some Britney Spears type shit [laughs]. And I really felt like this was my calling. This is my passion. I didn't really see myself in any other occupation. Like, I like fashion, I like music. I only see this in my future.

I will say, I've always been inspired by a lot of upcoming artists. I don't even listen to him that much, but Lil Tjay, he blew up in a year. I fuck with Playboi, D Savage, Hook, any female artist, but my biggest inspiration is myself. Just 'cause, back in the day-day, I used to be treated like a loser. So that's why I took the word back and now that's my adlib, 'cause everybody has that glow-up.

Were you into music when you were a kid?
I feel like I've always been a big music fan. My mom, she likes to say that I can memorize lyrics, but I can't memorize math questions like that. So I've always been a big music fan, but I will say that really at 17, 18, 19, that's when I finally, finally started seeing this as my calling. My birthday's in nine days. My golden birthday. So 5/20 I'll be 20, so we're gonna wish for the best.

Your mom's in a bunch of the TikTok videos you've posted. It seems like you guys have a fun friendship.
Yeah, I love her to death. She's one of my biggest supporters even though sometimes she doesn't quite understand me. I know she really does care for me. I'll be telling her, "Mom, we're gonna meet Adam22, we're gonna meet Charlemagne. Just wait." My mom, she wants to live back in Liberia, so I want to buy her a house and stuff. She provided for me. I want to provide for her.

So, Uzumak! is an anime reference.
That's Naruto last name. Naruto Uzumaki, but for copyright reasons I changed the "i" to an exclamation point. But my brother, he's the second to youngest before me, he's been a really big inspiration. I grew up with him, we grew up watching Toonami, Adult Swim, all that type of shit. He's really into anime and he's really into gaming. He does gaming tournaments and stuff like that. So just him being an influence on me, I feel like I'm really into pop culture stuff like that. So that's why I went ahead and just chose Uzumak! I feel like it's a very big mainstream anime, Naruto, so everybody knows that. So just for the public, for the culture.

What are your personal favorite series then?
I fuck with Naruto, but there's other anime out there. That's a long series as well. There's a bunch of filler episodes. So I would say my favorite anime right now that's not finished would be Kengan Ashura. That's my favorite one right now.

And Laaee is your first name?
Yeah, but in the future, if I really do blow up, blow up, I want to just change [my stage name] to L4433. Laaee means reliable in our language, which is Krahn. That's my grandma's name, so she passed and they named me after her. They were like, "She was hella nice when she was here." So they say I'm hella mean. But, I feel like I'm hella nice! Yeah, Laaee is my real name, thank God. My dad said he would never name me Laaee, he would name me Stephanie and I just don't see myself as a Stephanie.

I watched all of your music videos in chronological order the other day and it seems like you're getting more confident in each one.
Yes. And I would say it's just me progressing. I really do see my talent progressing, better and better. I never thought I could get better and better. Practice makes perfect, whatever, but like just freestyling by yourself or just really writing and sitting down and writing your own stuff, it does make you feel better, especially with the visuals by itself, as you can see in the video, like the first one right? That was a year ago. You can see the effects getting better, like just a lot of things progressing. It feels like I'm leveling up each time.

Yeah, the "Red Dot" video is the one shot at the lake, right? Where is that?
Yes. Weatherby Lake. It's right up north by Zona Rosa and the guy that's standing on the side of the boat, he was actually the security guard there. He was like, "What are y'all doing?" And I was like, "We shootin' a music video. You tryna be in it?" And he was like, "Sure." So that's how we got to shoot there. But that was actually really fun. That was back when I shaved my head and everything. That was back when I started taking rap seriously.

Is that somewhere you hang out or did you think it would just be fun to shoot there?
It was more like we want to do a video there just because I know a couple people who live there but it's kind of trespassing if you don't live there [laughs]. I thought it'd be hard for the video.

I also really like the video for "Yes!" What inspired the kind of dark, psychedelic vibe that was happening on that one?
Okay, so for "Yes!" since that song is already like -- I would say just my tone in general, I can do a gritter. I can do a really sweet [thing, too]. I can really change my voice -- honestly, truly. So that's why I wanted to be kind of sugar trap, but still I want to keep the person entertained. Like you're watching me like, "Oh, this is actually a cold visual, which is kind of nice." Like, especially with Cam, Souped Up, he's so hard. He's so talented. He's gonna shoot my next one actually, which is this Thursday. I'm going to be shooting my "Token" music video. So I just want to do something that when you look at it, you're like, "Oh, she's great and tight," you know?

Your bio says you're working on a mixtape right now. What goals do you have for it? What's that going to sound like?
So for the mixtape, it's gonna be the Uzumak! Tape v1. The first mixtape, I really just want to get out any songs I have in the vault that should have been out or whatever. So it's gonna be a sweet, dark vibe. I feel like my music is very much not male or female oriented. Like anybody can listen to it. I feel like most songs you can sing along if you're a female, some songs if you're male you can still sing along, but it probably won't resonate with you like that.

But I feel like this tape coming up will really sound like me, like Laaee. Like, "Who is Laaee?" Especially, now I'm gonna feel myself, but I'm really glad to have my name. Like everybody has their own name of who they are, type shit. I really just want people to hear my sound and hear me and not just see me. I really want them to hear me.

I missed an important question. You reference The Wizards Of Waverly Place in a lyric. Is that your go-to Disney show?
I fuck with anything pop culture. I like Disney, I like Nick, I like Toonami. Anything pop culture, anything has to do with TV, I probably most likely know, just because I really grew up watching TV. I really fuck with Kim Possible, Lizzie McGuire, a lot of girls. Even the show The Buzz On Maggie. It's an old show, but it was a show about like a fly and she was to be in a band. Even Hannah Montana. I feel like I'm Hannah Montana every day 'cause I don't go outside without the jewels, so it really is a double life type shit.

You do use a deeper voice in some parts of your songs. Do you see that as an alter ego or character type of thing?
I feel like I do have different personas. So when it's gritter, when it's real deep New York type tone, his name is Lawrence. And when it's real sweet, like a Valley girl, that's Lindsay. And then Laaee, it'll be a mix of the two, but it really just depends.

But that's why I honestly feel like I have an upper hand, just because I can change my voice. Maybe a little bit earlier this year, I was looking at my horoscope and stuff and it would just say, "Let go of anything feminine or masculine you thought about yourself." And like a lot of people, they're scared to show who they are. And especially with me being a black woman, they already put a hard exterior on black women. So that's why I was scared to even do the voice and stuff, but this is what's gonna make me different. This is what I need to do. 'Cause that's honestly my passion. I just want to show all of me and not hide anything.

Do you think a lot about gender dynamics and stereotypes and stuff outside of your music?
Of course, of course, I really actually do. Especially when people are going to high school, they went to high school with me and now they're hearing me now. I feel like I've changed a lot from high school, and in good ways. And I feel like we're in 2021 -- everybody's a little bit more fluid. Everybody's a little bit more open minded. And I'm all for the LGBTQ community. That's why I say my music could be for male or female. It doesn't matter. That's why I do want to show every part of my voice.

How long have you been doing your makeup like you are now and using all the jewels?
I want to say maybe 2018, 2019. I used to listen to Asian Doll a lot. She used to wear diamonds on her face and she has a bar in her song, she's like, "Bitches been hating, diamonds all on my face." That's hard. But I don't mess with Asian Doll anymore because she glorifies violence. And I don't like glorifying violence. She tweeted like, "Oh, you have to have three bodies to talk to me," knowing her ex-boyfriend just died to gun violence. I'm all for everybody loves everybody.

But I've been doing my makeup like this for about two, three years now. At first I just did glitter. And then it started evolving to like, oh, maybe my necklace broke, let me glue this on my head. Ever since then. And I can't see myself doing anything different. I put on makeup to look different. A lot of people, they put on makeup to enhance themselves or they're just putting on makeup just to cover something. I really wanted to put on makeup to look different. 'Cause every day, we human, so it's like why not look different each time? You know, character select type shit.

Go DJ

Go DJ! with Khrystal. and Bobbeh C.

Authentic Sounds From the Heart and Soul of Hip-Hop

Saturdays
10 p.m. - Midnight

bridge909.org/GoDj

KC LOCAL 90.9 FM
THE BRIDGE
TURN ON. TUNE IN. LISTEN LOCAL.

RECENTLY ON THE SITE

BY AARON RHODES

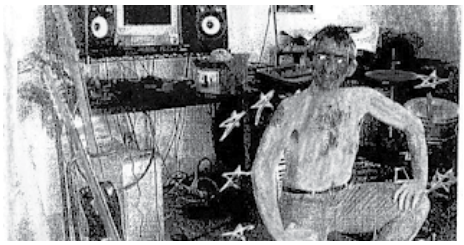
RACHEL CION: WANTED!

Rachel Cion is a chameleonic Gen Z singer-songwriter from Olathe, Kansas. If you read this blog consistently enough, you probably know about her rock band Bigfatcat, her pop songs "Collision" and "Violin" (the latter of which deserves a place on Charli XCX's "motherfucking future" playlist), or perhaps her earlier indie folk material. Instead of retreading literally any of that ground, Rachel's latest three song EP, Wanted!, sees her stepping instead into the world of country music.

JASS: LATE NIGHT LULLABY

This new digital single released by Jass last month is only available on SoundCloud and Audiomack, so I'm pretty certain it flew under the radar for some people. This is my attempt to fix that. Late Night Lullaby is made up of two brief tracks that play almost like demos or sketches due to their minimalist arrangements, but what should be noted is that Jass' restraint is one of her best qualities as a singer-songwriter. (That can also be observed on her debut LP, *At The Close Of A Decade*, which made my local 2020 year-end list.)

SILICONE PRAIRIE

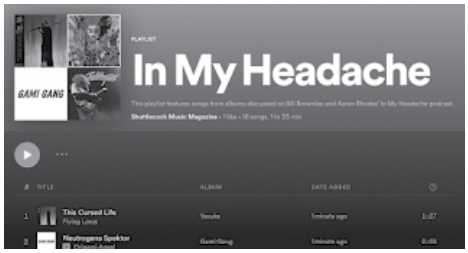


The pandemic experience has been different for everyone, but I think I speak for many in the Midwest and beyond when I say that November 2020 through February 2021 was a special type of frozen, isolated hell. Thankfully, one source of light near the end of that period was the latest offering from Kansas City's Ian Teeple -- a prolific musician, engineer, visual artist, and newsletter author. *My Life On The Silicone Prairie* is the debut LP from Silicone Prairie, following a single released last spring.

SCORES: "OVER/UNDER"

Ever Dream This Band? If you've followed local music in Kansas City and Lawrence long enough, you've probably seen its members on stage before. Scores is the new trio of scene veterans Austin and Alexander Ward (Hembree, The Noise FM) and CJ Calhoun (Cowboy Indian Bear, Bonzo Madrid). The group's latest single, "Over / Under," was written while Calhoun was traveling across Europe and longing for a newfound love interest back home. The track's steady rhythm and high-end sheen are not unlike the motor and finish of the sports car seen in its music video.

IN MY HEADACHE PLAYLIST



Hopefully by now you've checked out an episode of In My Headache, the new album discussion podcast I co-host every two weeks with Bill Brownlee. On each episode we talk about two new albums from the last month and one throwback album. If you're interested in listening to the music we discuss on each episode, you can find one song from each album on this handy new playlist that will be updated as each new episode is released.

SARIN REAPER: DEMO

As someone lodged squarely between two generations (born in January 1997), I might not have a clear read on things, but from my observation, a lot of members of Gen Z rely heavily on nihilism to cope with modern life. Sure, there's groups like the Sunrise Movement and the Twitter savvy masses who aim to make life hell for anyone they deem a bigot, but in the face of a pitiful job market, endless systemic racism, institutional failures, and impending ecological disaster, it makes sense why scores of teenagers today don't see much of a future. The standard options for expressing that nihilism seem to be video games, drugs, and image board posting, but one Kansas City area group of youngsters is voicing its distaste the old fashioned way: extremely loud and fast guitar music.

See full articles on www.ShuttlecockMusic.com

MY FAVORITE MERCH

BY AARON RHODES

DAVID CHAVEZ

David Chavez plays guitar and sings in the long-running Kansas City dream pop/shoegaze band Youth Pool, which is preparing to release some new material later this year. Hardcore fans may also recognize him as the vocalist of the now-defunct group Blindside USA. In this second edition of My Favorite Merch, we talked about his first interest in band merch, how he approaches designing merch for Youth Pool, and three favorites from his collection.

Can you remember the first time or one of the first times you were excited about or interested in a piece of music merch?

Yeah, one of the very first times that I was super excited about collecting shirts, and this kind of got me snowballing into where I'm at now. This was a good handful years ago, I don't remember exactly, but the band Free Spirit from Boston, that band had these shirts, all it said was Free Spirit in college varsity letters and then had the Lockin' Out logo, the lock on the back, which was automatically cool points. But the thing about that exact shirt was that they did so many different colorways and I'm a sucker for design and colors especially. And they did like five or six different colorways and I thought that was just this simple-ass design. I thought it was awesome.

Actually the first time I ever saw that shirt was Ned from Title Fight was wearing it at the Title Fight gig at the Jackpot in Lawrence, when there was only like, that was like on their tour for that one seven-inch ... Well, anyways, there's only like, 10 people there, 10-15 people give or take. And so I saw him wearing that shirt. I didn't even know that Free Spirit was a band at the time. I thought that design just looked so cool. I found out it was a band way later on and found out they're awesome. But anyways, those shirts were extremely hard to come by, by the way. But I ended up snagging the gray with yellow print on it, which I thought was awesome. And I eventually, a couple years down the road, got one of the red ones. But it was just a cool thing about those shirts, because I remember thinking the navy colorway was really cool and then finding out that there were only like 10 of those made, or they're only made for friends. So, you know, it was a really cool experience when I was just kind of getting into the shirt collecting.

You know, I didn't know about all these friends-only prints or all these like alternate colorways that exist. And you know, they were only released at the shows and it really influenced the way I thought about how I do my own band merch and colorways like that, too. So I'd say yeah, that was one of the first times I was really excited about a t-shirt.

Yeah, Lockin' Out has always had great designs.

They were the cool label back then. I mean, I think they're still a cool label now.

You kind of mentioned it there, but I was going to ask you about your process for making Youth Pool merch.

So when I do the Youth Pool merch, when it comes to the artwork -- and there's been a couple cases where I'll ask a friend to design something just because I have so many friends that are cool designers -- but usually, it's all me. I always have this one file saved of every single Youth Pool logo I've ever used and a bunch of alternate versions I made that a majority of people just haven't seen yet.

But the way I do the Youth Pool merch is I'll do them in kind of like --I don't know a good way to describe them -- it's almost like chapters in the band's life. So for example, like 2016 to 2017 era Youth Pool, I used this specific logo with this specific font with this specific symbol. And then as soon as those years were over and whatever album or song we're promoting, I think about the one that's coming out next, I view it as the next chapter and so therefore I'm going to change up everything just a little bit, maybe a whole entire different logo, different font, but I like looking at merch from that kind of standpoint.

It's kind of to really reflect different eras in the band's life as opposed to maybe a band being around for 10 years and using the same exact logo, even maybe the same exact colors throughout its entire career. You might see that shirt and think it's awesome, but have no idea that it came out in the '90s or the other way around, whereas you know with Youth Pool, if you see a certain design or certain logo on a certain shirt, you know that came out around the first EP. I've always thought it was cool when other bands did it, so naturally I kind of just incorporated it into my own style.

I don't know if you've seen this yet or got a copy, but I really love the Mil-Spec zine/book that came out recently where it catalogs all their whole merch with timeline.

Yeah, I thought that was especially awesome, because I've always wanted to do that same exact thing. Every shirt that my bands ever printed, I have a single one that I've kept for myself. I have it tucked away somewhere in my parents' basement. But I've always liked cataloging. The shirts are just history, especially for your own band. And yeah, when I saw Mil-Spec do that, especially with how nice theirs looked, I thought that was really cool.

I was wondering if you might be able to describe your personal style.

I like baggy stuff. I'm trying to think of my style. I honestly just wear whatever I want, you know, which is like, yeah, I guess everyone does that. But it's like, I don't care if I'm wearing fucking $5 sweat pants or if I'm wearing Supreme sweat pants. I wear whatever makes me comfortable, which happens to be a lot of fun and cool clothes, I guess. I really don't put a lot of thought into what my style is. And I've had people tell me my entire life that I had good style and I've always just been like, yeah, thanks, but I just don't do it on purpose. You know, it is what it is. But I'm flattered that people asked me about that. It's kind of cool.

OBITUARY
NORTH AMERICAN TOUR 1990
NOV 15 W. PALM BEACH, FL
NOV 16 MIAMI BEACH, FL
NOV 17 EBOR CITY, FL
NOV 18 ORLANDO, FL
NOV 19 MELBOURNE, FL
NOV 21 ATLANTA, GA
NOV 22 RICHMOND, VA
NOV 23 COLUMBUS, OH
NOV 24 DETROIT, MI
NOV 25 ONTARIO, CAN
NOV 26 TORONTO, CAN
NOV 27 MONTREAL, CAN
NOV 29 BROCKTON, MA
NOV 30 BAYSHORE, NY
DEC 1 BROOKLYN, NY
DEC 2 PITTSBURGH, PA
DEC 3 PENNSAUKEN, NJ
DEC 4 BUFFALO, NY
DEC 5 WASHINGTON, DC
DEC 6 CLEVELAND, OH
DEC 7 WAUKESHA, WI
DEC 8 MINNEAPOLIS, MN
DEC 9 CHICAGO, IL
DEC 11 AUSTIN, TX
DEC 12 McALLEN, TX
DEC 13 FT. WORTH, TX
DEC 14 SAN ANTONIO, TX
DEC 16 HOUSTON, TX
DEC 17 EL PASO, TX
DEC 18 GALLUP, NM
DEC 19 PHOENIX, AZ
DEC 21 RESEDA, CA
DEC 22 RESEDA, CA
DEC 23 OAKLAND, CA

I also wanted to know if working at a print shop, doing the screen printing and stuff, if that has impacted how you look at band merch and apparel and stuff like that.

Oh, yeah, definitely. Ever since I've been in the screen printing business, about six, seven years now, I've learned so much. I'm still learning so much about different garment types and such, but it's funny to see the types of shirts that certain bands prefer versus other bands preferring their certain styles. And it's real funny when you start to see patterns and what is something as simple as a type of t-shirt you know, something like a Bella Canvas, which is real slim fitting that all the hipster coffee bands, indie bands, they only print on those as opposed to like this punk band, who probably doesn't have a lot of money so they can only afford Gildan and so that's the reason why all these punk bands print on Gildan.

I've got my own pickiness and stuff about what shirts I wear, what shirts I like, but since I'm the one that's actually doing the work and I see all the behind the scenes stuff, there are definitely certain things make me view certain bands or the way they do stuff maybe not necessarily differently, but it really opens your eyes to a lot of fun behind the scenes stuff.

Alright, so what's the first item of yours you're going to share?

An Obituary shirt from their tour. The licensing says 1992, the tour says 1990. Not entirely sure how that works out. I'm not a big enough nerd to really care. But this shirt's really special. First of all, not only is it on a ringer, which you know -- my knowledge with vintage shirts is pretty vast -- I've never, ever seen another vintage Obituary shirt that was printed on a ringer. This is the only one and I follow a ton of vintage dorks, all sorts of people that collect all these $500 Kanye metal shirts or whatever. But I've never seen another one of these. So not only is that special, but this was actually my buddy Micah, this was his dad's and he actually bought it at the show in the '90s when his band opened up for them. And so it's basically you know, it's basically just been passed on down to me. And so aside from it being just an extremely rare and comfy piece, it's also just super special in that way.

Yeah, that is funny. I can't think of another death metal tee I've seen on a ringer. What was Micah's dad's band called?

His band was called Purgatory. They were kind of like a black doom band. He played bass. He still plays bass. He's really cool. I think Micah's dad loves me more than him, which is awesome. But yeah, they opened up for Pantera back in the day. His bass cab, Micah's dad's, which is like this massive 215, that's what we use in Youth Pool and Dysmorphisis.

Purgatory was from the KC area?

Yeah, they had to have been from Lawrence or KC way back. Let me grab my other shirt. This next one? I need to specify that this Primal Scream shirt is not one of the ones that just has a giant sun, but it has the sun and the logo on the bottom. That's real shit. And it's also an old Screen Tags tee, so it's the real deal. This was actually from Ireland. I got this off eBay a long, long, long time ago. I think motherfuckers try and sell this thing for like, $200, $300, $400 a piece now. I think the price keeps going up. I don't know why. But I got this guy for like, I'm just gonna say way less than $100. Which, you know, some people will look at me and say, "Wow, you spent more than $20 on a t-shirt. You're crazy." It's like, yeah, well, compared to most guys. I'm pretty sane.

The guy I got it from, I don't know if he worked for Creation back in the day or what, but he specifically said that this was printed in Ireland and he was at the shop for the Creation office basically. And it's from, I think '92, *Screamadelica*, when the record came out, but this piece is extremely rare. It's in such good condition. It's one of my favorite records. I've never seen another one that wasn't Kanye prices, so I hold on very tightly.

tag. And also this one's awesome because it's a three print. So yeah, obviously you got the front print and then you got the cool little logo. I'm a sucker for good sleeve prints. And then you got the big Catherine Wheel logo on the back. I love this shirt just because I always have a soft spot for the big fat, '90s style font, just in your face.

I just love the balls for bands that print big profanity on their own shirts. Not the cheesy giant "Fuck God" tank tops you know the white bros wear, but it's just a real small right there, kind of classy, but I love getting funny looks from a middle-aged folk at Oak Park Mall and shit.

I see you have the S.O.D. shirt hanging behind you. Maybe tell me about that one as a bonus?

Yeah, I just got this so I didn't think it was fair enough to call it my favorites. I had always wanted an S.O.D. shirt and I actually got this one a really good price off this dude that I guess was in Texas and runs a record shop. They played there in 1985 on their one tour. But yeah, I snagged this bad boy. It's the classic S.O.D. shirt, *Speak English Or Die*. Definitely probably get my ass kicked maybe if I wore this now. I might try it someday. And the back says Fist Bangin' Mania. I assume you know a bit about S.O.D., but it's just like, yeah, the whole album is just insane. Like every single song is specifically made to piss someone off. I was telling someone that they're basically like the commercial version of Anal Cunt and got away with it on a bigger scale.

Your next shirt?

Alright, third shirt. That was a tough one, but I'm probably going to go with this guy since everyone that knows me knows I wear this shirt all the time.

You've played some gigs in that one.

Yeah, this is my Catherine Wheel: Eat My Dust, You Insensitive Fuck shirt. And this thing is comfy. That's probably the reason why I wear it so much. I love Catherine Wheel. I wouldn't say they're one of my favorite bands, but they're up there. And also I mean, [one of] my favorite bands is Iron Maiden, and Rob Dickinson, the singer of Catherine Wheel, is Bruce Dickinson's cousin. So that's an automatic plus for me.

Also, green's my favorite color. So especially like this hunter green, on the big comfy Screen Stars

Okay, so who's a bigger S.O.D. fan, you or Antonio Marquez? I know you're both into them.

Well I'll tell you this right now: I didn't even know Antonio liked S.O.D. And you can run and tell him that. He never replied to my story on my Instagram. So what's he know?

I'm sure he'll read this and we'll figure it out in the comment section.

Yeah, publish this. Tell him he knows where he can find me.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF DAVID CHAVEZ

Listen to Youth Pool at YouthPoolUSA.Bandcamp.com.

PRAYER BONES

EXPLORING A COLLAPSING GOTHIC REVIVAL CHURCH WITH CLUB SINISTER

BY AARON RHODES

Westminster Congregational Church was constructed in 1904 at the corner of 36th and Walnut Street in Kansas City, Missouri. I admired the building as I walked by on some of my daily COVID lockdown strolls that I took last spring and summer to avoid losing my mind from sitting in my apartment all day. Its gothic revival architecture made it look a bit like a castle. That's part of why Walt Disney took a liking to it. Long before the structure became home to a custom furniture store and workshop (2016), the infamous animator's family moved to Kansas City and began attending church there (1910).

In February of this year, a structural collapse occurred in the building and it was deemed unsafe to inhabit and slated for demolition, despite its spot on the National Register of Historic Places. Apparently, Sam Unruh, the furniture shop's owner, had put over $100,000 into repairing the building over the years, but no parties had enough money to make the building habitable again. That's why in March, just before the demolition process began, I called up the members of Club Sinister to do a photo shoot.

Alex Horton and Ian Weidner, longtime friends and collaborators, moved to Kansas City from Oklahoma a few years back. Their first release as Club Sinister, a self-titled EP, came out in January of this year and features six tracks of sonorous gothic dream pop. Their first photo shoot as a duo was in a graveyard, so a crumbling 100 year-old church seemed like a logical next step.

An hour or two before sunset, we took some photos outside the building and made sure there wasn't anyone looking after the place. After shooting a few pictures of them on the street corner and a fire escape connected to the building, we slipped through a small gap between the fence surrounding the building and made our way inside. Immediately, we were in awe of the wreckage that lay in front of us.

A large portion of the building's roof in the main chapel area had caved in, leaving giant piles of splintered wood covering much of that area's floor. One of the rooms adjacent to the chapel had a gaping hole in the floor leading down to a dark basement area. There wasn't any sort of ladder down there and it was a long drop, so we just chuckled as we cautiously peered down with our flashlights shining down.

We all agreed that a view from the chapel's balcony would probably be great, so Horton and Weidner graciously allowed me to walk up the stairs first, in case they should cave in -- who would miss a journalist? Luckily, I made it to the top and the boys followed me up. Some of my favorite shots from the day came from up there. I took some of them standing at the edge of the balcony with the chapel beneath them. Then I sent them back down to be photographed down below in the chapel while I stood alone on the balcony.

Funny enough, as I read more about Disney's connection to the church after our visit, a relative was quoted in an article saying how much Walt loved to sit in the balcony.

PHOTO BY AARON RHODES

Listen to Club Sinister at ClubSinister.Bandcamp.com.

SWAN SONGS

KANSAS CITY RAPPER A'SEAN ON HIS NEW EPs, VULNERABILITY, AND EMBRACING WHAT MAKES YOU WEIRD

BY AARON RHODES

It's a hot and humid late April afternoon on Kansas City's Northside. Rapper and singer (more on that development in a moment) A'Sean and I have arranged to meet at the Gregg/Klice Community Center's outdoor basketball courts. As we sit on the bench courtside, a group of friends plays a pickup game on one end and a middle-aged man sings out loud and engages passersby while he hoops (rather erratically) by himself on the other end. A travel baseball team is stepping off a bus and preparing for a game at the Urban Youth Academy next door.

"I spent a lot of time up here as a kid," A'Sean says as he runs through the community center's amenities. It's just a short drive from the Greenleaf Apartments where he grew up and where we spoke for our last magazine interview following the release of his album *One Big Happy Family* in 2019. Though he's proud of those songs and what he accomplished with them, A'Sean says he's in a much healthier headspace now, nearly two years later.

"When I released *One Big Happy Family*, it was such a dark place and time for me," he says. "At that point in time, everything in my life, all the happy shit was centered around the music … I feel like I [was] not desperate, but too eager and ready for something to be more than what it is in the moment. Versus now, I'm just finding more joy in the process and just understanding that this is probably the more fun part of it."

I could relate to the feeling; having grandiose visions and ambitions for what I wanted to do after graduating high school, lacking the professional skills needed to properly bring those ideas to fruition, and due to youthful naivety, being frustrated and confused when things didn't fall into place. "I wasn't ready for what I wanted," I say before A'Sean finishes my sentence, "-- at all, bro." "I thought I was ready with *One Big Happy Family*," he continues. "No, you weren't," he says with a laugh, speaking to his past self. "Not at all. You would've fuckin' crashed and burned if the world you wanted was handed to you at that point."

In addition to his personal growth as an artist, A'Sean zooms out and discusses how his generation of Kansas City musicians has grown along with him over the past several years. "I'm seeing real music industry people tweet about artists here," he says. "Just seeing that is eye-opening and provides more hope than we was already working with, with the little shit we had. I think we startin' to figure it out. At first we was moving around this motherfucker blind as hell…"

One very noteworthy part of A'Sean's growth has come from his taking vocal lessons. "I've always wanted to sing," he says. "I grew up with different types of music in the house, so singing was something I always enjoyed. Never was good at it. I still wouldn't say I'm good at singing." Aside from the long-standing interest, Kye Colors recommended Drake's *Better Than Good Enough* documentary in which the pop-rap superstar hires a vocal coach. "The coaching has been dope," A'Sean says. "I've learned so much about music. Understanding timing, structuring songs, knowing what key to be in, which ways I can purposely play with my voice, figuring out where my range is at, just all of that. It's been real fun. Especially 'cause it's like you're learning more about the shit you wanna do. The vocal class is probably one of my best investments, honestly."

A'Sean seems to be getting returns on that investment already, too. You can hear some of his melodic vocals in action on his new EP with longtime friend and collaborator [Walt] titled *Seven Days*. [Walt] had been taking a hiatus from working on music for a bit, but he told me in a recent phone interview how participating in Kye Colors' Wasteland Sessions -- an invite-only event this past New Year's Eve modeled partially after J. Cole's *ROTD III* sessions -- left him feeling inspired. "I called Sean and asked him if he wanted to do a project," [Walt] says. "We've always spoken about doing another project together and he was down. The same day, he pulled up on me and started working."

Considering that A'Sean and [Walt]'s friendship and working relationship date back to their freshman year of high school, it wasn't hard to shake off the rust. The six-song release took only seven days of recording to complete, thus the title and the album art's biblical imagery. Past efforts of this duo were often packed with as many bars as the songs could hold. There are just as many meaningful moments on *Seven Days* as there were on those older tracks, if not more; it's just the presentation that's different.

All six songs were produced by [Walt] and feature a mix of rapping and singing from the pair. Three of those songs include substantial amounts of time with no drums happening, allowing gentle guitars and sunset-hued keys and synths to provide the backdrop for the emotive storytelling that takes place. The EP's stories include a heartrending tribute to a late friend on "Taz World," a vintage R&B summer jam about a strained relationship on "Language," and the long road to learning proper self care on "On Tour."

When discussing "On Tour," A'Sean again alludes to a subject he had touched on earlier: the dangers of an artist centering their entire life around their work. "I've been going to therapy and shit," he says. "I've learned a lot of the reasons why I work so hard is because at some point, this may have been what I've been living for. Once you take a passion and that's your lifesource, you start to lose the love for yourself."

Lyrics that sound like those of a straightforward love song are really communicating the stress he'd been putting on himself as an artist and the important elements of his life that he neglected by doing so. It's an exercise in grounding. "It's easy to get caught up in that love [from supporters] and live in that and just keep working, then you look up and it's like, damn, I haven't got my fuckin' hair cut in three months, I haven't bought new clothes, I ain't went on no trips, I ain't did nothing for myself … Nothing."

A'Sean ditches metaphor completely on "Try," a song from his other new EP, *A Perfect World*, that he crafted with local producer 1Bounce. His raps on the song touch on the ways he's been impacted by his parents' struggles with addiction, the bad habits that plague his own life, and a brave revelation that he survived childhood sexual abuse.

"The pandemic, I feel like, was heavy on a lot of people and a lot of that shit I was talking about [on that song] was heavy on me," he says. "When I wrote the song, I wasn't worried about people [knowing these things]. I kinda wanted someone to check on me."

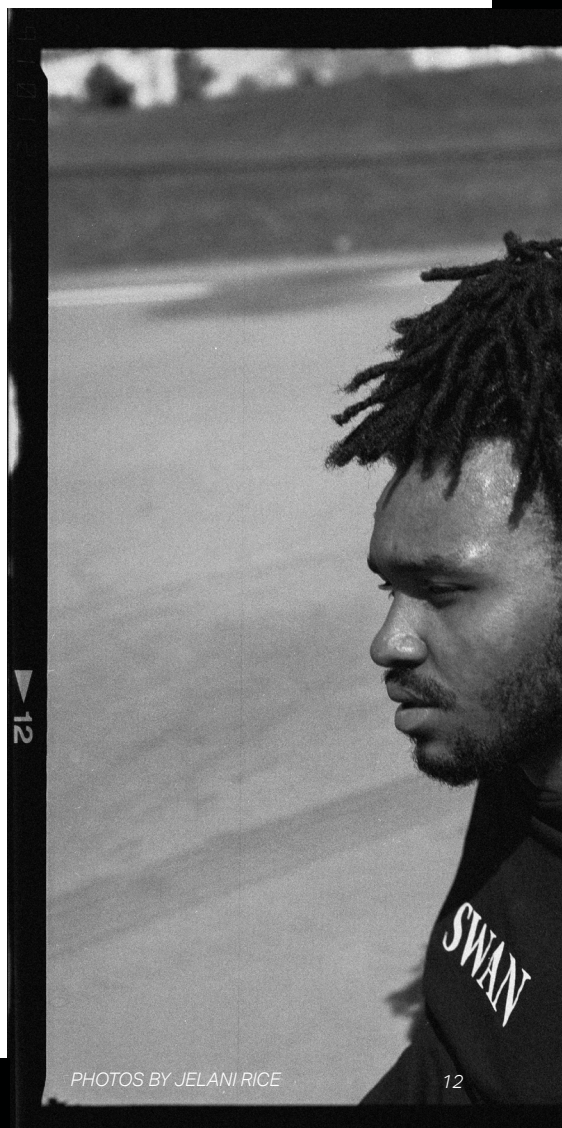
He says he appreciates all the people who tell him they like his work and how relatable it can be, but he'd resented the fact that people often don't think to ask how he's doing personally. He says he's moved past that feeling however, citing how difficult it can be for people to discuss those hard topics and that it's not his fans' job to check on him. "You're the entertainer," he says of his role. "You just chose to be the vulnerable guy … That's what I got a therapist for."

Instead, he's simply proud of himself. "It let me know that as an artist, there isn't a boundary that I'm not willing to break. That's the one thing I've held on to for fuckin' 18, 19 years and I said it and I didn't have any fear about people knowing that," he says of the lyric about the abuse he endured.

A Perfect World, released on March 28 (only three weeks before *Seven Days*), features a more traditional hip-hop sound than A'Sean's collaboration with [Walt], but is no less enjoyable. The contrast between the two really only speaks to his versatility as an artist. While A'Sean and 1Bounce have performed on many of the same shows and share collaborators and acquaintances, this EP was their first time working together. They'd both been open to doing a project for a while, but it was just a matter of timing.

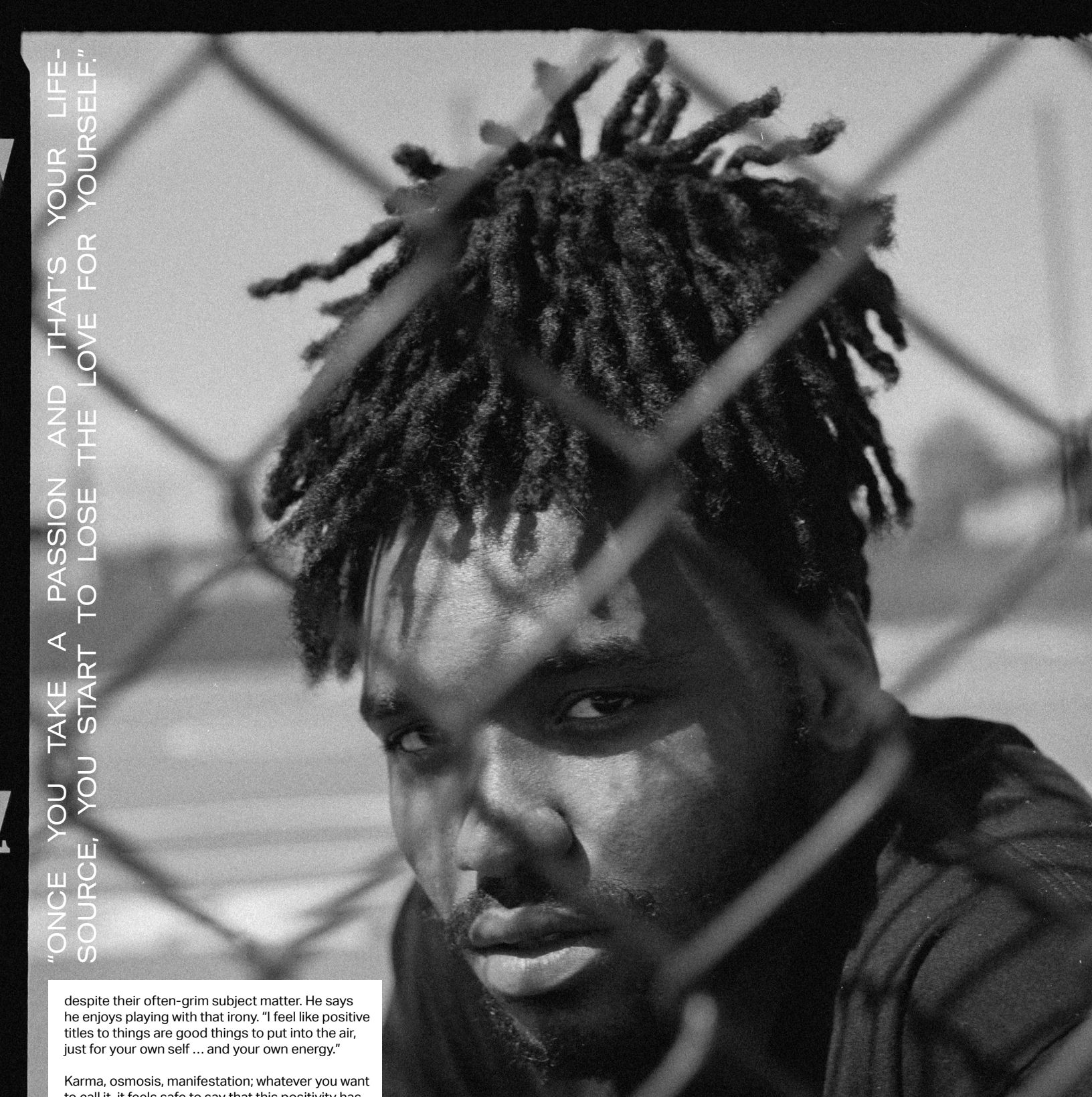
"He's telling his truth," 1Bounce says of A'Sean in a phone interview. "That always will resonate with me and a lot of other people."

For better or worse, A'Sean is a truth-teller, and a lot of times, the truth can be an ugly thing. I point out how both *One Big Happy Family* and *A Perfect World* have ironically positive-sounding titles



PHOTOS BY JELANI RICE

"ONCE YOU TAKE A PASSION AND THAT'S YOUR LIFE-SOURCE, YOU START TO LOSE THE LOVE FOR YOURSELF."



despite their often-grim subject matter. He says he enjoys playing with that irony. "I feel like positive titles to things are good things to put into the air, just for your own self … and your own energy."

Karma, osmosis, manifestation; whatever you want to call it, it feels safe to say that this positivity has only been helpful in A'Sean's endeavors so far. His clothing brand, SWAN, has been selling well as of late. A friend that was passing by the basketball court during the interview even asked if he had any merch on him to sell (he didn't, as he recently delegated order fulfillment to a friend so he could spend more time working on music).

Inspiration for the brand name, which stands for Secretly We're All Nerds, dates back to his childhood. "I used to be like seven, eight years old and make these voices up in my head," he remembers. "Each voice had a story and background … Nobody else I was around ever talked about it, so I kept it to myself. But my sister's husband would find my notebooks full of these stories I'd write down. They thought I was rapping 'cause they didn't read it, but nah, these were my comic book characters … That's when I knew I was a little weird."

The SWAN name came to him a year after graduating high school. He'd been inspired to make a documentary after observing that several of his classmates and acquaintances who were popular and played sports in high school were going to college for art and other creative pursuits. "Oh, you were a weirdo the whole time!" he says of those classmates, wearing a sly grin. "You made fun of the kid who ran around like he was a Naruto character. You watch Naruto, too. You're weird. It's okay for you to be weird."

While he hasn't had the opportunity to make that documentary yet, this idea, a wide embrace of individuality, he realized, would be the perfect ethos for his brand. "I honestly feel like one of the first steps to happiness is accepting the shit that is different about you," A'Sean says.

It feels good to watch someone spread their wings.

Both EPs are available now on all streaming platforms. You can find SWAN merchandise at www.SWAN.team.

LOVE GARDEN SOUNDS

BEST DOLLAR BINS IN A RECORD STORE IN THE STATE OF KANSAS.

822 MASS ST. LAWRENCE, KS 785-843-1551
LOVEGARDENSOUNDS@GMAIL.COM
LOVEGARDENSOUNDS.COM

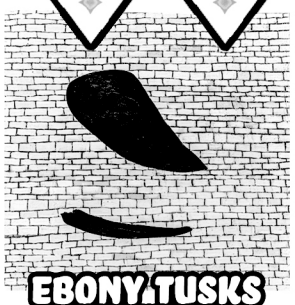
HIGH DIVE Records!

High Quality Local and Regional Music

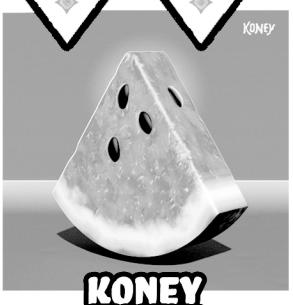
highdiverecords.com

HIGH DIVE RECORDS

Check Out These New Releases!

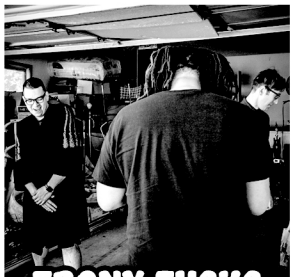


EBONY TUSKS
HEAL THYSELF

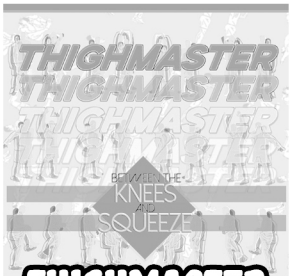


KONEY
SELF TITLED

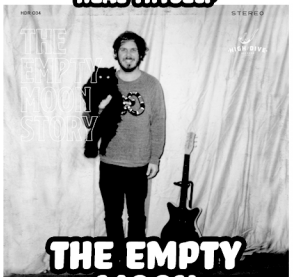
FULLBLOODS
SOFT AND VIRTUAL TOUCH



EBONY TUSKS
HDF



THIGHMASTER
BETWEEN THE KNEES AND SQUEEZE



THE EMPTY MOON
THE EMPTY MOON STORY

THE CREEPY JINGLES
SELF TITLED

BLUE COLLAR PRESS

CUSTOM TEES + MERCH SINCE 1999

785.842.1414

BLUECOLLARPRESS.COM

Made in Lawrence

SCENE REPORT: OKLAHOMA CITY

PHOTO OF INFERNA COURTESY OF GARETT FISBECK

BY AARON RHODES

Oklahoma City sits roughly five hours southwest of Kansas City and is home to a punk and hardcore scene that often surprises those who encounter it. Ross Adams has been part of that scene since the '90s, playing in bands like American Hate, Grasseaters, and Fuckheads among others, creating visual art, and booking Everything Is Not OK, a four-day fest featuring dozens of DIY punk and hardcore bands from around North America, from 2015 to 2019. I figured there was no one better to talk to when it comes to learning about OKC punk and, as evidenced below, I think I was correct. I called Adams via Zoom in April as he was preparing for his move to Atlanta.

Off the top of your head, is there a throwback Oklahoma punk tape or record you'd want to recommend to anyone reading?

I think the obvious is N.O.T.A. Their self-titled LP and the *Moscow* EP are flawless punk records, in my opinion. And they were kind of a band that put Oklahoma on the map first, you know? That's old stuff, but I guess lesser known stuff, Fensics is late '70s kind of like garage-y power pop punk. They had an EP called *Tornado Warning* that's pretty badass, that's one of my favorite things. `

There's really so much, it's all just kind of obscure. As far as the late '70s, early '80s, even into the mid '80s, the only band that got any notoriety was N.O.T.A. But there were lots of other cool bands going on. It's always been a weird Oklahoma thing to not go on tour [laughs]. … When I was growing up and getting into punk there were a lot of good bands here, but nobody outside of Oklahoma has ever heard of them because they never left here.

What was your first step into Oklahoma's punk scene? Was there one band or one show that really blew your mind and got you interested?

Yeah. So I got into punk in the early '90s and I was 13 or 14. I had an older brother, and he's passed away (RIP), but he was into Black Flag and the Misfits and shit like that, so I used to steal records from him and hide them in my room. He was five years older than me, so he would -- I don't know why -- he went to school before I did in the morning. But as soon as he left, I would go into his room and grab like a Black Flag shirt or a Sex Pistols shirt and I'd put it on and then I would put on a button-up over it and catch a ride to school and then immediately go to my locker and ditch the button-up so I could like be cool and punk. And then I had to sneak it back into his room before he found out and beat my ass [laughs].

So that was my introduction, you know, starter punk, Black Flag, Minor Threat, Dead Kennedys, shit like that. But when I first got into it, I didn't know that it was still a thing. The only person that I knew that liked punk was my older brother. I ended up meeting some skaters and punks that I went to school with because one day when I was like 13 years old. I was wearing a Dead Kennedys shirt to school and this crew of skater kids came up to me at my lunch table in the cafeteria and they were like, "Hey, are you going to see the Dead Kennedys when they come here in a week or whenever?" And I was like, "What? They're playing here? That's awesome. Yeah, I'll go." And they all just called me a poser and laughed at me because I didn't know they weren't a band anymore [laughs].

Then I pretty much hated all the punks that lived here because they were all mean to me and called me a poser. But I don't know, the first show I went to, the first DIY show I went to was a touring band called Half Empty. It was from the Bay Area, from San Francisco I think. I was just hanging out with my dorky friends on the weekend and we're just playing Magic The Gathering or something on Super Nintendo, just being kids, and I don't know who it was, but one of us had gotten a flyer for this show. I remember we all kind of sat around debating whether we should go or not because we all wanted to but we didn't really fit in with any punks or anything. We were just the dorks that listened to the Descendents too much.

So anyway, we decided to go. One of my friends had a car and it was in the town I grew up in called Edmond, which is a suburb of Oklahoma City. It was at a place called the Sheep Farm, which was an actual sheep farm. It was a house that had a little sheep farm on it. And so we went to it and it was this band Half Empty and then the local bands, I think it was The Real Ones. You know Justin Betterton? The Real Ones was his older brother Josh's band.

Yeah, I started coming to shows around the time Josh passed away.

Okay yeah, so it was Real Ones, The Lunch Bunch, Boxcar Children, and Half Empty. We went to this show, and I mean, it was awesome. It was crazy. Because, you know, it wasn't just the punks from

our school that were mean to us. It was punks from all over the city and from other suburbs and from Oklahoma City proper and I ended up making friends and all the kids that lived in the house were all super welcoming. Because we were obviously scared teenagers going into a stranger's house. Like, I'd been to concerts, but I'd never been to a punk show before.

That's where I bought my first records, from the touring band, all the bands were sick. It was in the garage of the house. It was super crazy. I had a knife pulled on me at that show [laughs], which was pretty wild that at my first punk show somebody pulled a knife on me and look at me now! I'm still doing it [laughs].

Did you mosh into someone or something? How did that happen?

No, I was actually standing in the kitchen, as you do at parties, and I was talking to this girl. This dude came up to me and threatened me for talking to this girl. He was like, "Hey, don't talk to her," you know, just like being a man about it. I think I was either 13 or 14. I truly wasn't hitting on this girl. That was like a whole other world. You know what I mean? Like, I just had the courage to go to a punk show, so I wasn't trying to do anything, I was just trying to meet people that weren't the mean skaters at my school.

So he tells me not to talk to her, and I don't know why, but I talked back to him. So we had some words and then he pulled out a knife and threatened me. That was pretty funny. He said something and then he said he was going to cut off my thumb. This is what I remember. Because this is, fuck, almost 30 years ago. He was like, "Watch your mouth or I'll cut your thumb off." And I thought that was like a really weird threat. So I just held out my thumb to the guy. I was like, "Alright, go ahead, cut it off," and he put his knife away and walked away. At that point, everybody was watching this situation. But pretty wild. But yeah, so that was my first gig. And then I was at every show after that. I don't even know how many shows I've been to.

You were like, "I really want to lose this thumb."

I was like, "I'm gonna see if this guy is gonna threaten me again. Fuck it." [Laughs] That guy, a couple weeks or months after that, he actually did end up getting arrested for stabbing someone. And I like to think that I was the catalyst. Like, I think I called him on it and then the next person he pulled the knife on called him on it, and he wasn't gonna back down [laughs] … But he did stab somebody like 15 or 16 times.

I hope that person is all right. Hopefully not dead?

Yeah, so do I. I don't think they died, 'cause he got out when we were still teenagers.

Speaking of the Bettertons, I hadn't thought about this show in a while, but I have a poster of it in my room at my parents' house. One of my first DIY shows was The Men with Dark Ages and No Class and it says it on the poster your band Grasseaters was supposed to play it.

Yeah, we were supposed to play that show, but we broke up instead. Yeah, it's super annoying. I saw that poster once and it made me really mad.

Yeah, I either hadn't listened to Grasseaters until recently or it'd been a very long time, but you guys would've been a great fit on that, because it's all the same kind of moody, anxious Midwest hardcore.

I loved being in that band, but it was a trip. We were at each other's throats all the time. I've never been in a band with such a rigorous practice schedule. We practiced four or five times a week, but we were just like always at each other's throats. We were all in a weird place in our lives at the same time. We were all really mean and we were really mean to each other and that made for a really good band, but it made for a short-lived band for sure.

Have you talked in any interviews about Brain Smasher before? I love that it's kind of this tongue-in-cheek oi thing. And it's funny because I saw Lumpy & The Dumpers at FOKL one time and I'm pretty sure they covered a Cock Sparrer song. So you and Marty both have this kind of goofy appreciation of oi.

Oh, absolutely. Yeah, I like oi. But it's like a guilty pleasure almost, or like a goofy thing, like I don't take it seriously. I grew up really, really hating skinheads. There were a lot of skinheads in Oklahoma, if you can believe that. Most of them were also racist as fuck, if you can believe that. So I grew up kind of hating them and I couldn't really be open about liking oi because I hated skinheads because I had really bad experiences with them. But then as I got older, I was like, fuck it. I've thought enough of them. I'm gonna listen to this music. It's fun. And it's funny, but it's also really funny to goof on, I think and that was kind of that band.

Actually, I'll give you a quick rundown on it. I think maybe American Hate was going on a little tour or something. I think it was like me and Taylor from American Hate, the night before we left, we went to eat at Cici's Pizza -- which is another hilarious thing -- and I was sitting there in the booth and this guy who's cleaning the tables, he walks by us and he's like, "Oh, man, you look like Brain Smasher." And I was like, "What? Alright, dude, cool." Come to

"HE WAS LIKE, 'WATCH YOUR MOUTH OR I'LL CUT YOUR THUMB OFF.' AND I THOUGHT THAT WAS LIKE A REALLY WEIRD THREAT. SO I JUST HELD OUT MY THUMB TO THE GUY."

PHOTO OF AMERICAN HATE BY AARON RHODES

find out, it's an Andrew Dice Clay movie. So I look like Andrew Dice Clay's character from this movie at that time, I guess, which is, I don't know. I'll take it just as is. I don't think it was a compliment.

Our first show that tour was in St. Louis and so that had just happened. So we were like dying laughing about it and that's when I was hanging out with Marty and we just decided right then, let's start the band **Brain Smasher**. So he recorded the tracks and sent them to me and I recorded the vocals and then I think we played three shows. Yeah, we played St. Louis with Rixe, that French oi band.

Were they entertained?

Yeah, yeah, they liked it. It was really funny. We practiced right before the show. I just drove there to play that show. So we went to practice and then loaded the gear and went and played the show. And then we played in Oklahoma City at The Shop and that breakfast show at the fest.

PHOTO OF SHAKA COURTESY OF GARETT FISBECK

What do you think makes Oklahoma City different from other punk scenes around America?

I think on a base level, everyone here is kind of just goofy and there's a really strong sense of community that's not based in punk, but coexists with the punk scene. If you go to shows here, I think probably like 75% of the crowd doesn't look punk, as far as the look goes, or whatever. Everybody just kind of is a freak.

But I guess I don't know, because I've only experienced other shows in other cities on a nightly basis. So it is hard to say, but punk is such a big umbrella in Oklahoma City, like any weirdo kind of falls underneath it. So yeah, I don't know. Everybody's just kind of a weirdo in their own way.

The Freak City.

Yeah, Freak City. Exactly.

Could you tell me about a few active Oklahoma bands that you're excited about and a brief description of each of them?

Yeah, absolutely. I mean, obviously, **Inferna** was the band that I play in here, which is like a crust band. And we're still doing stuff -- we're like recording a video to stream on YouTube or whatever, like a live set. And we had just recorded right before the pandemic last year. So we still have technically a new recording because we've never played those songs live.

So I'll get my bands out of the way first. **Druj** is still a band, but Azeta lives in Minneapolis. So we did a live stream in July and that was pretty sick.

And then bands I'm not in: **Primal Brain** is a band that pretty much started in the pandemic. Their first show was supposed to be March 17 of last year or something, but it was canceled. I don't know, it's pretty gnarly hardcore with a really good rock-n-roll edge to it, which is something that I don't think a lot of bands can pull off, honestly, combining those two sounds. But yeah, that band is cool. They dropped a demo, I think, middle or end of the summer and they're actually, I think, about to do another one. So they're gonna have two releases out at least before they get to even play live. But it's really cool.

Amenaza is really good. They're some weird blend of psychedelic crust and Motorhead. But you've probably seen them. They played the fest a couple times. But they're super good. They're recording for a full-length. So that's another band that I've always been excited about.

Shaka is a younger band and this is the crew that needs to be looked out for, honestly, in Oklahoma City, because their band is badass. All younger kids. I don't even know how old they are. Honestly, at a certain point, I don't know how old or young people are 'cause I'm too fucking old [laughs]. But they're like teenagers for sure. They were in high school last year I think, so they're teenagers. It's just really raw American hardcore. That band is really good. And I don't know the names of their other bands, but I know they've all started offshoots throughout the pandemic. So Shaka is a band to look out for and then any band that contains members of that band, definitely worth a shot.

There was another band called **The Throwaways** that started. They were also supposed to play their first show in March of last year. Them and Primal Brain were both playing their first show together that got canceled. That band is kind of like a pogo punk band, but pretty cool. Real snotty vocals, pretty fun sounding band. But I've never seen them.

I read an interview of yours where you talked about starting EINOK because you didn't have the money to travel to fests in other cities. You also talked a bit about the history and tradition of punk in OKC. I was kinda curious about what kind of impact you think the fest has had on your scene and how that impact may or may not live on.

I don't know what the future holds, but I definitely know that it did impact it quite a bit. It definitely had a huge impact. It gave people here something to be excited about I think and also a way to introduce people to a lot of those bands they wouldn't have gone to another state to see, but since it was here, they did get to see it. If you look at the lineups, you'll notice that every year, there's more local bands playing it and that's literally because every year there were more local bands.

The first year we did it -- obviously there's other bands and there's other weird facets of punk that I'm not necessarily heavily involved with or involved with at all, but in our scene, in our circle or whatever, there were like four or five bands maybe. And then after the first year, bands just started popping up, people started bands and everybody kind of had something to be excited about. And then the idea of getting to play this big thing, that was kind of a cool thing.

And I think it's probably like this in other cities too, where there's fests, but a lot of these bands wouldn't have the opportunity to play a festival that size or that magnitude in other cities because no one's heard of [these new bands]. They're from Oklahoma. They haven't toured, they don't have a record out, but since it was here and I was doing it, they got to play. So that was cool. The best part of that fest for me always was just seeing people have a good time. That's like my love language.

I was also wondering how you see the legacy of the Q boat show a few years after the fact.

For me personally, in retrospect, I think it's hilarious. You know, at the moment, it fucked me up. I was really upset, like I had told them explicitly no fires, you know, it was like something that I had actually said to them, so when they did that, I was pretty mad. And like, you know, we thought we were gonna get in a lot of trouble. I had to talk to the fire marshal that day. And then yeah, it kind of like, I don't know, it definitely put a dark shadow over the fest for a little bit, you know, and there's definitely people who are still mad about it and who will never let it go and that's like, honestly, that's fine. I understand.

But watching that video on YouTube for me is hilarious and also like, really any time after that when some normie asked me about a punk show or like tried to like figure out what it is that I do, that was always the show, the video that I just pulled that up to be like, "Yeah, this is like every show that we do," and freak people out. I'm still friends with all of them, I love Austin. I love all those guys. So there's like no hard feelings in the end. In the moment, though, it was a little different.

Well be prepared when I hit you up in five or 10 years and ask you how to book a DIY fest.

[Laughs] Don't do it. Or do it. I can tell you how to do it right now. It's honestly really easy. Just expect for everything to go wrong. Just literally prepare yourself for everything that can go wrong and you'll do okay. And then you might get surprised with a boat fire.

You can find Inferna's recent livestream set on YouTube and see Adams' visual art at ArtOrWhatever.com.

Read the extended version of the article at www.ShuttlecockMusic.com

BE SURE TO STOP BY...

The Vinyl Underground at 7th Heaven

"THE VINYL UNDERGROUND IS LOCATED INSIDE 7TH HEAVEN AT 7621 TROOST AVE., KANSAS CITY, MO.

WE SELL NEW AND USED VINYL RECORDS (LPs, 45s, 78s), CDs, CASSETTE TAPES, AND POSTER ART, AS WELL AS VINTAGE STEREO EQUIPMENT.

MAKE SURE TO STOP BY ON JUNE 12 AND JULY 17 (OPEN AT 7 A.M. ON THESE DATES) FOR EXCLUSIVE RECORD STORE DAY TITLES."

MON - SAT: 11 A.M. - 8 P.M. / SUN: 11 A.M. - 6 P.M.

FB: @THEVINYLUNDERGROUNDKC *IG: @VINYLUNDERGROUNDKC*

SODA SELECTOR

BY AARON RHODES

Hello, my fellow soda sippers, and welcome to the May 2021 edition of Soda Selector. Since my brain is wired in a way that favors Structure and Rules and things of that sort, my idea for this column was to write about three new-to-me sodas each month. This month, however, I accidentally tried more than three new sodas and felt compelled to discuss all of them with you.

I'll start off with the three beverages I purchased with the intent of reviewing in this column, all of which came from KC Soda Co. in the City Market. I will begin with the drink that came from a company I was previously unaware of called Ben Shaws. I picked up the cream soda from this brand -- apparently founded in 1871 -- based solely on the packaging. It was a 12 oz. can with a baby blue pinstripe background, a clean, scripty logo, and an old-timey photo of a bunch of guys standing next to horses. Pretty sweet. Those who listened to the Sippin' On Some Soda podcast I co-hosted know my penchant for cream soda and my wish that it was as commonplace in restaurants here as it is on the East Coast. And let me tell you, if Ben Shaws' cream soda was widely available, I'd be pounding it on a regular basis. The first thing you notice upon drinking it is the overwhelming vanilla flavor. I remember taking cooking classes in high school and seeing my share of baking projects ruined by a juvenile overuse of vanilla extract. While that feels like it's close to being the case here, the drink is also quite sweet and somehow manages to counter this strong vanilla flavor in a very pleasant way. Cream soda heads, do not skip this one!

The next of my soda shop grabs was Sprecher Diamond's Asian pear. My love of the Sprecher brand is also well documented, but I have to say that this was my first disappointing experience with the Milwaukee company's offerings. I was excited to try my first pear soda (shoutout to all the pear) as I was a big fan of pears as a child (side note: is there a stigma against eating pears as an adult? They seem hard to find? I don't know, man), but this one was pretty one-note. Despite it being a fairly authentic pear flavor, there wasn't much fizz to it and it felt like it was just shy of being a bottle of watery pear juice. Speaking of the bottle, the label is pretty strange for the Sprecher Diamond sodas as well; just kind of a bad Photoshop illustration of a diamond and a bunch of colorful swirls around it with a black background. Maybe they were going for kind of a premium brand thing? Someone on a soda subreddit mentioned that this line has been discontinued and it seems apparent why. There are, however, lychee, lemongrass, and blackberry varieties out there, so who knows, maybe those are better.

Last among my soda store pickups was the Northern Soda Company's blue raspberry. The Minnesota soda maker was a favorite on the podcast, earning our praise for its Vulcanus Rex (cinnamon cream), caramel cream, and maple root beer varieties (despite the latter two tasting nearly identical). Like with the Sprecher drink above, this was also my first letdown from the Northern brand. While this blue raspberry soda was not offensive by any means, I'm confident that if I was given it in a blind taste test, I would guess that it came from a Pepsi- or Coke-owned brand due to its relatively uninteresting flavor profile. Just kind of a blue raspberry sugar water. Maybe fruit flavors aren't Northern's strong suit, but I'm sure I'll continue working my way through their lengthy lineup of libations regardless.

Now on to my off-the-cuff selections. A disclaimer: I am not a medical professional, but I am somewhat certain that my drinking a Coca-Cola With Coffee (caramel flavor) minutes after receiving my second vaccine dose provided me with a few extra hours of productivity before I was turned into a bedridden, Moderna brand zombie for the next two days. I'm also open to the idea that imbibing these two concoctions on the same day may have given me some Peter Parker-style superpowers that I am as of yet unsure how to activate. I'll keep you updated on that.

As you know, I'm not much of a coffee guy, but I enjoy a sugary frappe drink from time to time, so that plus the idea of absolutely bouncing off the walls after drinking something like this was enough to make me try it. I'll be honest to you: putting this up to my lips for the first time was a frightening experience and I did so at a sloth's pace. Upon finally drinking it, it tasted about how I guessed (and hoped) it would -- like someone had dumped a can of Coke in your frappe. Despite the jarringly acidic flavor you encounter at first, it was surprisingly potable and felt kind of like a life hack and made me wonder how this combination hadn't been manufactured sooner. It somehow manages to retain the zing of both coffee and cola. As fun as this little experiment was, I will likely not be drinking this on a regular basis, because becoming addicted to something like Coca-Cola With Coffee seems particularly psychotic.

A fun part of writing and podcasting about soda is that now a handful of people I know will randomly message me about new sodas they come across. The most recent of these messages came from my friend Ian Kopp of the band Dope Piece. He asked if I had tried Sunkist's blueberry lemonade and I had not. Not long after this, I came across it at a convenience store and figured I'd give it a try. Sadly, much like the Sunkist strawberry lemonade we tried on an early episode of the podcast, its blueberry counterpart was similarly lackluster, though I concede that it's probably drinkable enough if you've been outside for a while on a hot summer's day.

Lastly, Mountain Dew Rise. How is it different from Mountain Dew Kickstart? Why does Mountain Dew need two sodas marketed for morning consumption? Why are any sodas being marketed for morning consumption? (I think all of this is very funny.) I've been known to grab a Kickstart orange or black cherry tallboy from the corner store when I'm getting bored of other bevs and need some caffeine; Kickstart tastes pretty good, contains a small percentage of real juice, caffeine, and B and C vitamins. Cool!

But in the last few weeks, this new line of Mountain Dew drinks has popped up. Rise features a different lineup of flavors than Kickstart, claims of immune support (zinc), a "mental boost" (citicoline and caffeine), real juice (5%), and no added sugar.

The label features a weird, geometric illustration of a lion and the website features an ad with LeBron James in it. I ended up trying the Pomegranate Blue Burst and Orange Breeze flavors (on separate occasions). The lack of sugar was somewhat evident and I was not magically more focused or energized than any other caffeinated soda would leave me. I am now calling on Mountain Dew to quit their morning soda shenanigans and I hope you'll join me.

BLOGROLL

BY AARON RHODES

Here's all of the best (non-Shuttlecock) local music content from the last month. Less talk, more rock.

AUDIO CONTENT

-Overland Park's Justus West Knows Something About Success

This recent KCUR segment hosted by Steve Kraske includes a 24-minute conversation with area musician Justus West. West is a 22 year-old who was nominated for a Grammy for his co-production work on Mustard's "Ballin'" and has also worked with Mac Miller, Ariana Grande, Princess Nokia, John Legend, Logan Richardson, and Alicia Keys.

-Streetwise with Dave Jorgenson

The Pitch's flagship podcast, hosted by editor Brock Wilbur, recently included a guest spot from Kansas City native Dave Jorgenson, known for his important work as the Washington Post's TikTok guy.

-Chapo Trap House #511 with Thomas Frank

Best-selling author and Kansas City native Thomas Frank guested on one of the Dirtbag Left's favorite podcasts to talk about his latest book, The People, No: A Brief History of Anti-Populism.

-Center Cuts / Station To Station recent episodes

Center Cut Records' two podcasts have snagged new interviews with 90.9 The Bridge DJ and Middle Of The Map Fest co-founder Chris Haghirian and veteran Kansas City vocalist Julia Haile (Hi-Lux, The Good Foot, The Buhs).

-Go DJ with guest host Dom Chronicles

In case you haven't heard, Go DJ is a new hip-hop show on 90.9 The Bridge. The sixth episode of the two-hour program featured rapper Dom Chronicles as a guest host and included a couple choice local cuts and some of Dom's favorite artists from over the years.

PHOTOS: BOTTOM LEFT, MAC DRE COLLAGE COURTESY OF KCPD / PATRICK JOHNSON; TOP RIGHT, "STILL SPINNING" BY KJHK

For links to all of this material, find this Blogroll post on www.ShuttlecockMusic.com.

-Who Killed Mac Dre? - Donald Morrison, Passion Of The Weiss

This article, written by Los Angeles journalist Donald Morrison, is perhaps the most fascinating piece of music writing I've read in years (I realize I may be biased here, but still). After conducting dozens of interviews and digging through 1,300 pages of unsealed KCPD reports over the course of 10 months, Morrison has compiled this remarkably thorough and comprehensive piece of writing on the murder of Bay Area hip-hop legend Mac Dre that occurred in Kansas City in 2004.

It begins by summarizing Mac Dre's rise to prominence in the Bay and the cult following he achieved in Kansas City -- the cultural exchange between our two locales remains notable to this day. The piece goes on to introduce the local players involved with bringing Dre to town for a concert on that fateful Halloween weekend and lays out the timeline of events that ended with his tragic end, shot to death in an embankment off Highway 71.

Nobody was ever arrested for Mac Dre's murder. For over 15 years, rumors and different versions of events have been passed down by word of mouth, YouTube video, or message board post. Kendrick Blackwood's 2005 article in The Pitch, Tone Death, did a very admirable job of outlining infamous Kansas City rapper Fat Tone's rumored involvement in Dre's murder (which is pretty much fully debunked in both articles) and the ensuing murder of Fat Tone (seven months after Dre's death) that came as misguided retaliation.

VIDEO CONTENT

-Joe Cornejo interviews Harv

Hot 103 Jamz DJ and Yadda Yadda Podcast co-host Joe Cornejo recently hopped on a Zoom call with KCK-born musician and producer Harv. After graduating from Harmon, then Alabama State, Harv moved to Atlanta where he worked in several studios. His first major label placement was for production on Gucci Mane's infamous "Lemonade" (on which he played keys and bass). Soon after, he was asked to join Justin Bieber's touring band during the *My World* era. Cornejo and Harv cover all of this ground, plus Harv's production work on Bieber's recent #1 hit "Peaches."

-DIY Labels & Everything But The Band virtual panel

Hosted by Reno art collective The Holland Project, this two-hour panel discussion includes Jensen Ward and Jon Kortland (Iron Lung Records), Max Ward (625 Thrashcore), and Grace Ambrose (Kansas City transplant, Thrilling Living). The discussion covers all the ins and outs of running a DIY record label in 2021 and feels important given that kids can't easily discover and learn about this world right now due to the absence of gigs.

-Still Spinning: Lawrence music survives a pandemic

This recent KJHK mini-documentary directed by Cami Koons and Nicole Dolan features members of Chess Club, Pale Tongue, and LK Ultra discussing how the pandemic has impacted their bands and how they've adapted over the past year.

-Amplify Lawrence: Amped For Camp Spring Festival 2021

This 120-minute video features discussions from volunteers at Amplify Lawrence (f.k.a. Girls Rock! Lawrence) as they prepare for this year's camp, as well as performances from several local/regional acts. The virtual festival concludes with a set from one of the camp's most notable alum-bands LK Ultra. LK's set includes two unreleased songs.

-Suneaters: Loving Relationship

Given how accessible HD video cameras are at this point, it's surprising that more local acts don't give the "visual album" thing a shot. Kansas City indie rockers Suneaters -- a band that features Lotuspool Records founder Chris Garibaldi -- did just that with Loving Relationship. The 35-minute film essentially includes a music video for every song on the band's 2015 album of the same name. Scenes include a cheery, Satanic office party, a movie theater brawl (filmed at Screenland Armour), and a chainsaw killer love story, among others. The production quality is impressive and the gags are plentiful. The film is available to watch now on Prime Video.

-Well Rounded Podcast recent episodes

The Topeka hip-hop podcast's four most recent episodes include some solid gets: AyEl, Cuee, Dom Chronicles, and Maadcxmmander.

-The Saber Magazine Podcast with Jooby Truth

Saber Magazine editor Andres Nelso sits down with the KCK rapper to dig into his upbringing, his discography thus far, and his latest project titled *At All Costs*.

READING MATERIAL

But for the first time in Who Killed Mac Dre?, we get to hear directly from the Kansas City man who helped provide transportation for Mac Dre that weekend. We also get to see police documents on the vehicles involved, a diagram of the crime scene, Dre's external wound location chart, and details from numerous interviews conducted by KCPD Detective Everett Babcock and by Morrison in his reporting.

Some of the men alleged to be involved in Dre's murder are now dead (one was murdered in 2010, another in 2014) or incarcerated on unrelated charges. A couple of them couldn't be tracked down for comment in this article. And while we'll likely never know every detail of this case, Morrison's reporting finally gives the general public the best sketch of that weekend we've got yet and includes a thoughtful epilogue on Dre's legacy as an artist and the future he was robbed of.

-Vitreous Humor, a Great Lost Emo Band, Makes Peace With the Genre 20 Years Later - Josh Modell, Bandcamp Daily

Most people who come into contact with the Kansas City/Lawrence area music scene for any substantial amount of time at least know of The Get Up Kids. Maybe they've heard of The Casket Lottery or Shiner. One Lawrence band emo/post-hardcore band that was lost to time -- besides among Real Heads -- was Vitreous Humor. The group's post-breakup discography compilation, *Posthumous*, has recently been remastered and issued on vinyl for the first time and it is essential listening.

This piece on Bandcamp's editorial page gives a brief history of the somewhat short-lived band and includes lots of fun tidbits like their meeting with an A&R from Elektra Records and how Conor Oberst and Phoebe Bridgers are apparently big fans. Nick Spacek also interviewed the band for the May issue of The Pitch and broke down step by step how the reissue happened.

-Shawnee Mission Faces: Skylar Rochelle, SM East grad and show host on The Bridge 90.9 - Leah Wankum, Shawnee Mission Post

In case you missed my interview with her on the Shuttlecock Podcast (or you're just a big Skylar fan; I wouldn't blame you), you can read about all of her many music scene gigs and about how she got her start as a DJ at The Bridge in this Shawnee Mission Post profile.

-Women In Music - By Design, issue 5

By Design, if you're not familiar, is a Kansas City based, bi-annual print magazine by and for young creative professionals. In its most recent issue you can find a spread featuring local artists Khrystal, Mae C., and Jass giving tips to any readers who hope to make music and build a career for themselves. The magazine is available for purchase on their web store.

-An interview with Ricardo Flores (Mentira) - My War, issue 7

The latest issue of this Belgian punk and hardcore fanzine includes an interview with Ricardo Flores, guitarist and vocalist of Kansas City's Mentira. The conversation covers Flores' introduction to punk rock, his moves from Mexico to Orlando to Kansas City, Mentira's formation and 2020 LP, and some discussion of COVID era politics. The zine also includes a random photo of The Get Up Kids circa 1999 inside its front cover. It can be ordered stateside through the web stores of Sorry State Records or Razorblades & Aspirin.

-The three most recent newsletters - Liz Cook, Haterade

I decided a few months ago that the writing highlighted in Blogroll would only be music related, but for the second edition in a row, Liz Cook's Haterade newsletter has been too enjoyable to exclude. Here are the impossible-not-to-click subject lines from her three most recent transmissions: Eat an Apple in the Shower, The Restaurant Staffing Crunch Is Real. Scapegoating Unemployment Insurance Won't Help, and What Do You Do with Mountain Dew?

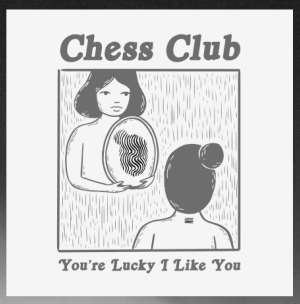
-5 Reasons Sticky Fingers and Enema of the State are Companion Albums - Grant Sharples, We Have The Facts And We're Rejecting Your Pitch

Kansas City freelance music journo Grant Sharples recently got to interview Mick Jagger about his less-than-enjoyable Dave Grohl pandemic collab for Consequence. What's more enjoyable is Sharples' recent newsletter in which he makes a convincing argument for why the Rolling Stones and Blink-182 have more in common than one might think.

NEW RELEASES

from Kansas City's Rock & Roll Record Label Cooperative

Omaha



Lawrence

Kansas City

NEW LPs COMING SOON FROM
FRED WICKHAM CARAVAN - FROGPOND - RED KATE
HUMMIN' BIRD (Tulsa)

TRUCK STOP LOVE EMMALINE TWIST HEADLIGHT RIVALS
FAULTFINDER WICK & THE TRICKS LIQUOR BEATS WINTER
RICH YARGES AND THE POP MECHANICS LIBATIONS
MADMAN STIFF MIDDLE FINGERS PIZZASAURUS REX

HANG TOGETHER...OR HANG ALONE

black-site.org